

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7968

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 5509

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ET

SUBJ: ETHIOPIA--FOREIGN MINISTER ZEWDE GABRE-SELLASSIE

1. GOE FONMIN ZEWDE GABRE-SELLASSIE TOLD AMB SCALI NOV 27 THAT, IN HIS OPINION, MOST RADICAL ELEMENTS OF DIRG HAD NOW TAKEN CONTROL AND THEY ARE TRYING TO ELIMINATE REMAINING MODERATES WHO PRO-US IN GOVERNMENT. ZEWDE STRONGLY DEPLORED LACK OF US AMBASSADOR FOR PAST EIGHT MONTHS AND SAID THIS ABSENCE HAS ENCOURAGED RADICALS. IN VIEW OF TRADITIONAL US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY WITH ARMED FORCES, PRESENCE OF US AMBASSADOR WOULD HAVE HAD MODERATION EFFECT, PARTICULARLY SINCE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY RECOGNIZES USG HAS PROVIDED MORE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA THAN ANY OTHER AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. HE BELIEVES THAT QUICK ASSIGNMENT AND ARRIVAL OF NEW AMBASSADOR COULD STILL PROVIDE CHANCE TO AVOID THE WORST.

2. ZEWDE EXPLAINED TO AMB ACHAUFEE SAME DAY HIS PRESENT SITUATION. HE SAID HE HAS NOT RESIGNED BUT HAD RECEIVED TELEGRAM REQUESTING HIS RETURN.

3. ZEWDE ACTIVELY PROMOTED GA ACTION OF NOV 27 TO INTERVENE IN ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES IN ORDER PREVENT FURTHER EXECUTIONS. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE TOLD AFRICANS, INCLUDING TANZANIAN PERMREP SALIM, WHO TOOK LEAD ON THIS MATTER, THAT PRIVATE DEMARCHES WILL DO NOT
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GOOD. IF, AS ZEWDE EXPECTS, ETHIOPIAN

REPLY IS UNSATISFACTORY HE WILL RESIGN, POSSIBLY IN PUBLIC
DISPLAY OF DISAGREEMENT WITH HIS GOVERNMENT.

4. ZEWDE CLAIMS HE CANNOT DISCUSS SITUATION WITH HIS
OWN DELEGATION HERE BECAUSE EACH MEMBER, WHATEVER HIS
PERSONAL
REACTION TO EXECUTIONS AND OPINION OF DIRG
POLICIES, MUST THINK OF HIS OWN FUTURE.

5. ZEWDE MADE QUITE CLEAR THAT IF HE RESIGNS HE EXPECTS
TO STAY HERE. HE REALIZES THAT THIS COULD PUT HIS MOTHER
AND SISTER IN SOME DANGER. HOWEVER, HE BELIEVES THAT IF
HE WERE TO RETURN WITH HIS FAMILY, ONLY RESULT WOULD BE
THAT LIVES OF MORE PEOPLE, I.E. HIMSELF, HIS WIFE AND
CHILDREN, WILL BE EQUALLY ENDANGERED. WE ASSUME THAT ZEWDE'S
THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS FUTURE WILL BE CLOSELY HELD.
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